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ABSTRACT

The general condition of black children is reported with a focus on maladaptive behaviors caused by being black in American society. Black youth are characterized as alienated, poor, poorly educated, and lacking safe housing. Government responses to the needs of these children are fraught with social barriers and bureaucracy. As in all institutional structures, social programs usually lose sight of their true mission. The contradictions that social institutions engender create a "catch 22" for blacks. Gains of the 1960s and 1970s have not eliminated injustices and inequalities. They have, however, weakened the black family. Solutions to these problems should include the following: (1) a redefined social agenda for blacks based on unity and self-determination; (2) the development of a socially supportive environment for nurturing black children; (3) a cultural revolution which establishes a black identity and value system. (VM)

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SURVIVAL OF THE BLACK CHILD: OUR RESOURCE OF THE FUTURE

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SURVIVAL OF THE BLACK CHILD: OUR RESOURCE OF THE FUTURE

We are guilty of many
Errors and many faults,
But our worst crime is
Abandoning the children
Neglecting
The Fountain of Life.
Many of the things
We need can wait
The child cannot

Gabriel Mistal

Cleveland, Ohio

Michael W. Turner, 17, was sentenced to 66 to 255 years in jail after pleading guilty to brutal crimes against thirty people over a ten month period of time.

Turner, an admitted cocaine and heroin user, dropped out of school in the seventh grade and had been living on the streets for about four years. He cannot read or write. His only visitor in five months in County jail was his lawyer.

A sixteen year old youth, Jacques Broussard, strangled a teen-age girl named Marcy Conrad. When his friends thought he was only boasting about the killing, he took them to see the body. None of them told their parents, and only one finally went to the police.

Seventeen year old David Santos has lived the last three and one-half years of his life in a secured detention facility where minors tried as adults are sent. According to the District Attorney, since age ten, David has been arrested thirty-eight (38) time on a variety of charges, including weapon possession, narcotics possession, car theft, a number of robberies and two homicides.

David Santos is an intelligent, articulate, perceptive kid, but he is also a kid who by age thirteen had killed his first person and who has killed at least once again since then.

Michael, Jacques and David represent a small ever-increasing alienated group of Black youth. The indifference, alienation, disrespect for self and others is present in a growing number of youth who are faced with inadequate schools, overburdened parents and soaring unemployment. The poor, Black, uneducated, angry Michaels and Davids have been joined by the middle-class, Black, educated and confused Jacques.

The increases in Black-on-Black teenage violence in the suburbs has been evidenced by the death of a Shaker Heights youth (1981) in Lee-Harvard and the stabbing of a John F. Kennedy High School youth (1976) during a Cleveland Heights High School dance. The resurgence of youth gangs is on the increase.

Recently, a friend of my daughter informed us that her brother was transferring from a Black college to a White college because the Black college was too Black and he could not relate or adjust to the lifestyle. The conditions of the prevailing economic and social environments have resulted in maladaptive behavior.

Black children in America today are being programmed for self-destruction. The increases in teenage homicides and suicides reflect the extent of their detachment, alienation and lack of identity. Our children, the hope of the future are in trouble!

What are the general conditions of Black children in America today? A report from The National Black Child Development Institute, issued October 30, 1981 focused on the conditions that haunt Black children. Based on official and professional studies, "The status of Black children in 1980", also examines the Government's responsiveness to the children's needs.

To begin with, forty-two percent (42%) of all Black children in the United States live in poverty. The way the system works, few even as adults will get out of it. The hazards begin before birth. Black women are twice as likely as White women to do without prenatal care. Largely as a result, thirteen percent (13%) of all Black babies are born underweight, and Black babies are almost twice as likely as Whites to die in their first year.

Several million Black children are exposed to unsafe housing and poor nutrition, important factors in what the Institute describes as "The poor health that plagues many Black children from the cradle through adulthood." Their health problems are compounded by "a systematic inaccessibility to competent health care." According to The Report, more than forty percent (40%) of them go an entire year without seeing a doctor. Almost as many get only institutional care, which usually offers little if any preventative help. Large numbers are without Polio and Measles shots. Under the circumstances, it is not surprising that they run a thirty percent (30%) greater chance of dying before their fourteen birthdays than do White kids.

Black children also often suffer from inadequate day care. The mothers of about half the three to five year olds work or are looking for work outside the home (including fifty-six percent of single mothers). They are up against an increasingly severe shortage of day care facilities.

When natural families are no longer able to take care of their kids, they are confronted by the child welfare system. The Report describes this system as "perhaps the ultimate barometer of the tremendous bureaucratic, discriminatory and social barriers" encountered by Blacks. Supposed to protect the children, the system instead fragments Black families, isolates the children, places disproportionate numbers in foster care and keeps them there. Social agencies, for instance, often fail to recognize the "prevalence of extended families throughout the Black communities" and remove children from their homes instead of fostering the use of the extended family. "Many existing child welfare systems are designed to perceive flaws",

The Report notes, and are not only hasty in removing children from homes but reluctant to consider most willing Black families as competent adoptive parents.

The Report states that, "Real alternatives do exist that can help Black children in foster care or in risk of removal." These are available through experienced Black social agencies such as The Cleveland adoption agency, Harambee, "but The Government has yet to sanction and promote such resources."

The Institute also stresses the "substantial" remaining differences in the quality of education for minorities and Whites. It scores inner city "education systems as substandard" only producing drop-outs and functional illiterates. The Institute also attacks "the intolerably disproportionate classification of Black students into special education classes, particularly those for the educable mentally retarded (EMR)." In 1978-1979, Blacks comprised forty-one percent (41%) of all EMR students, although accounting for only seventeen percent (17%) of all students. The Study concludes, "Substantial evidence indicates that discrimination and poor assessment, not coincidence or student failure, account for the huge disparity in placements."

And after school, what? The National Urban League says at least sixty percent (60%) unemployment. In a recent year a quarter of young Black men and more than a third of young Black women could not find a single day's work. Indicative of the barriers in the business world, most jobs held by young Black people are in the public sector. More education is no answer: The unemployment rate for college-trained Blacks is the same as for White high school drop-outs. The Black child in America today still lacks a fair chance to live, learn, thrive and contribute.

Young people today have no stake in the institutions because they have been excluded.

According to a 1981 speech in Cleveland by Marion Wright Edelman of The Children's Defense Fund, poverty was labeled as the largest single continuing problem of Black children.[1] Pointing out that while the Reagan Administration is saying that poverty has been ended, Mrs. Edelman pointed out that the Black child is more likely to be born poor today than a decade ago.

Mrs. Edelman told the Cleveland Press in an interview before a Trinity Episcopal Cathedral speech, one in three Black children is poor and sixty percent (60%) of public school children are on welfare. In Cuyahoga County one in six Black children is poor. She said that in the United States only four million of some twelve million eligible poor children are being periodically examined under a Federal Sickness Prevention program. In Cuyahoga County, Mrs. Edelman said, 71,000 children were eligible for the Early Periodic Diagnosis Treatment Program, but only 5800 were screened last year. Mrs. Edelman pointed to Cleveland's schools where in a year there were 4397 high school graduates but also 3947 drop-outs. The Black unemployment rate here, she said, is four times that of Whites while nationally it is three times that of Whites.

What are the forces responsible for the conditions of Black children in America? Answering such a question involves a definition of values and a general analysis of the environment. Values represent the ideals and goals that are cherished and respected by individuals--things people believe in. Values are developed relative to the conditions of a society. Values determine a persons world view or purpose in life. Without values as a frame-of-reference, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to establish one's philosophy of life. What determines a value? All ideals, beliefs and goals of individuals are the results of their material conditions or environment. At birth everyone's mind resembles a clean slate, with no imprinted impressions, ideals, beliefs or goals. Only through exposure and reactions to the conditions of the environment does the mind become imprinted with impressions, ideals, beliefs and goals.

The wider society consists of major institutions such as the Family, religion, education, business and government which reflect the values and norms of mainstream America.

The environment in which we exist nurtures and programs our minds and lives. All of our daily actions mentally, physically and spiritually are reactions to the dictates of the environment. What we eat! The way we dress! Our concept of beauty! What we strive for! Even the toilet paper we use! Human behavior is a product of environment. Human beings are creatures of habit who react to the conditions and demands of the environment. One assumption basic to understanding human behavior is that every significant act is done to satisfy some need. These needs as identified by A. H. Maslow range from lower-to-higher order needs:(2)

Physiological needs--food, clothing, shelter
Safety needs--security, order, stability
Belonginess and love--affection, identification
Exteem needs--prestige, success, self-respect
Self actualization--doing what one can do best

The term lower and higher merely indicate that some needs assert themselves earlier than others in the development process and are more directly concerned with biological satisfaction. The lower need must be reasonably satisfied before the next higher need is sharply felt. For example, the starving man will risk his life to get food. His physiological needs takes precedence over his safety needs.

In assessing the environmental conditions of the Black child, it is necessary to understand the relationship between their basic human needs and institutional responses. My analysis of the Black child's environment will involve a social systems approach of the wider society and the Black community.

The concept of a system has been elaborated most fully by Talcott Parsons and his associates and collaborators.(3) A system is an organization of units or elements united in some form of regular interaction and interdependence. The key words in this definition are units, organization, interaction, and interdependence. According to Talcott Parsons, a social system is an aggregate of persons or social roles bound together in a pattern of mutual interaction and

and interdependence.

Theoretically, the Black community should be viewed as a social system bound up with and heavily influenced by the major institutions of the wider society. An institutional survey of the latter part of the twentieth century America reflects a series of crises as serious as any we have encountered in history.

> Cities--edge of bankruptcy, tense with racial hatred and choking on their own pollution.
>
> Family--arena of conflict and violence between husbands and wives, or between parents and their children; and the aged are shoved aside to finish out their days as best they can.
>
> Education--the training of the next generation, a wealth of evidence proclaims, has frequently become compulsory miseducation. Schools at best have become a machine to fit the young to the demands of society and at worst a prison.
>
> Work--has lost all meaning except as an effort to satisfy the material needs engendered by compulsive consumption; automation contains as many threats as promises.
>
> In the political sphere, full and informed participation in the governmental process is more myth than reality, as the complexities of a large-scale, technological society overwhelm democratic controls and dissent is viewed as moving in the direction of treason.

In the realm of ultimate values, weekend ritual shoulders out religious faith, and a secular sense of larger purpose maintains itself with the greatest difficulty. These are major domestic dilemmas that effect the wider society and they lie within the context of the threat of thermonuclear war.

Institutional structures created by human society have a marked tendency to harden and solidify, a fact which may be corroborated by merely taking a look at the political and economic institutions around us. Jeffersonian political logic has been ignored. As one of the founders of the wider society, Thomas Jefferson knew that as power becomes entrenched, it loses sight of purpose--hence his advice, "God forbid we should ever be twenty years without a rebellion."

What are the roots of this institutional sclerosis? All institutions, whether political, cultural, ecclesiastical, or national, are inclined to succumb to the pressures of egoism, and to lose sight of their true mission. This is certainly connected with the reality of evil and of sin, expressed in the struggle for power, even in societies which have already accomplished their social revolution. Institutional sclerosis has also been perpetuated by a dictatorship

of consumption. This phenomenon occurs when the transcendental dimensions of life are forgotten, and ontocratic structures cloud the horizon, then the cult of the standard of living inevitably takes control and leads to the idolatry of production and things. This eventually results in the total disintegration of the human personality, as it finds itself deprived of its freedom. At this point, man abandons his struggle for justice, truth and human community, proving that he has become enslaved to structures petrified by ideology.

The technicological ideology of western society has created a catch "22". The significance of the catch "22" has profound implications for the wider society of America. Man has existed on earth for millions of years. Until recently most of us have assumed that man will somehow continue to exist; however, our attention is increasingly called to the possibility that what the destructive forces of the natural environment have been unable to do in the contest between man and nature, man-made changes in the physical environment may quickly do. We now come face-to-face with the possibility that without radical shifts in man's relation to his physical environment, man may be destroyed by the pollutant-induced changes in that environment. What may not be as a clearly recognized in these days of emphasis on correcting the pollution of the physical environment, is the equally urgent need to correct and prevent further pollution of the social or spiritual environment. The advanced technology of modern communications has created a condition in which the contradictions of complexed social orders, the atrocities of interpersonal, intertribal, and international conflicts, the inequities inherent in practically all of our social systems, as well as the richness of our cultural and technical accomplishments constantly bombard the human spirit with relentless assault and stimulation. Human beings, accustomed to far simpler social environments, have reacted to these inputs with adaptation. As these inputs increase in complexity and intensity, the process of adaptation becomes complex. Some observers see these processes reflected today in growing insensitivity to social and moral indignation or shock, increasing insulation and isolation in personal-social interchange, alienation from the concepts, institutions and affiliations which heretofore have provided stabilizing points of reference, and disaffection or less of a sense of faith in nature, in society, in authority figures, or in oneself as continuing influential forces.

These adaptations are probably enabling man to exist in a progressively threatening environment. They may also, however, be the mechanisms of his extinction, since adaptive behavior at one stage of development may be counter-adaptive at another. Reptiles once started on a course of evolutionary adaptation. They gained in number and complexity of protective structures until, as dinosaurs, they dominated the earth and sea. But the adaptive armor developed in order to survive the rigors of that particular period became to heavy a superstructure to be supported by the accessible environmental resources. Or to put it differently, the dinosaur may have become extinct because his adaptation to one aspect of the environment precluded his effective utilization of another aspect of the environment which was an essential source of sustenance. Similarly, the protective adaptation of our human personality to the rigors of the

increasingly polluted social environments may result in the isolation of the Black community from essential sources of support for our personal and spiritual survival.

The contradictions in the environment of the wider society has created the Catch "22". The dictatorship of consum;tion and idolatry of production has created the need at any cost for infinite growth in a finite environment. Such a need is buttressed by the predominating wider societal values of egoism, materialism and hedonism. Latter twentieth century America parallels Rome at its decline. Edward Gibbons (1737-1794) in his Decline and Fall of The Roman Empire said that the following attributes marked Rome at its end: first, a mounting love of show and luxury (affluence/materialism); second, a widening gap between the very rich and the very poor; third, an obsession with sex. The prevailing values and the societal and environmental disharmony associated with the science of the wider society have all the seeds of its and our ultimate destruction.

What are we doing as a community to counteract the aforementioned conditions?

On December 4 through December 6, 1981, Black Nationalist Forces from around the country attended the first National Plenary Conference on Self-Determination in New York city. Some two hundred individuals representing such organizations as the N.B.H.R.C., N.B.I.P.P., R.N.A., APSP, APD, BUT, AAPRP, NBCC, NCBL, CWP, LRS, C.P.*, etc., came to the meeting.

In late July, 1982 six hundred delegates who were mainly elected officials of small Black cities in the south and concerned citizens attended The National Summit Conference on Black Economic Development in Gary, Indiana. The issues discussed at both conferences were a replay of the rhetoric of the 60's and 70's--self-determination, a Black liberation army, boycotts, Black capitalism, etc. Those who do not learn from History are destined to repeat it.

The contradictions of American society continue to haunt Black America. The quantitative gains of the 60's and 70's era vis-a-vis politics and education have not insulated us from the evils of the economic system--racism, classism, sexism and imperialism. Our news reports are filled with stories of increasing Ku Klux Klan activities, sniper attacks, and bloody, racially inspired violence in areas such as Collinwood and East 55 Street and Superior. When these overt acts of violence are placed against a background of growing conservatism and racial animosity, I find myself wondering whether we are expected to witness a replay of the horrors to which we were subjected in the days when our validity as human beings and as American citizens was the subject of serious debate.

In the 1960's, Black college students said, "Enough!" and set into motion a train of events with an outcome we could not have imagined in our greatest flights of fancy. We saw the ugly side of America:

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* National Black Human Rights Coalition (NBHRC), National Black Independent Political Party (NBIPP), Republic of New Africa (RNA), African Peoples Socialist Party (APSP), Afrikan People Party (APP)

The high powered hoses turned on women and children, dogs and night sticks loosened on fallen men. We also learned the depths of our own dignity: Little Kindergarten children walking tall between rows of armed soldiers there to protect the children against the frenzy of White southerners determined to maintain their traditional way of life. We saw our Black elders take to the streets to demonstrate their determination to sit wherever they wanted on the bus. Our determination electrified men and women of good will everywhere. Laws were passed. Custom was set aside in the interest of domestic peace; and the most overt signs of injustice faded from the public view.

A few voices pointed out the continuing injustices and inequities of our political and economic system, but our attention had shifted to other issues: Vietnam, The Women's Movement. Those os us who argued that serious problems continued to exist were accused of refusing to concede how much better things were for Black people. But, although conditions had improved for those of us in a position to benefit from the new opportunities, they remained the same for a large and growing segment of the Black population. And once again, because they were most vulnerable, the plight of our Black children serves as an accurate barometer of the work still ahead of us. The state-of-affairs and quality of life of Black children is a profound indictment against the Black community.

A 1972 study by Horace Mann Bond, former Dean of The School of Education, Atlanta University and President Honorarious Lincoln University, hypothesized that certain environmental factors are necessary for healthy personality and academic excellence. The research was based on a study of the Beginnings of 517 Black American Scholars.(4) Dr. Bond isolated the following important environmental factors.

* The family with its psychological and motivational climates.
* The influence of the school, and of individual teachers.
* And the psychological and motivational climates of the community and of community institutions.

What is the status of institutions in the Black community as they relate to Dr. Bond's environmental factors? Are the institutions satisfying basic human needs? The Black Family as the primary institution is in a state of chaos! Why are Black families on the edge? Increases in child abuse, female single-headed households, teenage pregnancy, divorce, etc., evidence a change in values associated with urban lifestyles. Urbanization, Welfare and unemployment have had a profound effect on The Family.

Urbanization of Blacks began after the two major wars of this century. Blacks migrated to the large northern cities in search of a Promised Land. Instead, they found crowded housing, communities devoid of family or friends, Welfare lines, northern racism and daily stress.

National Black United Front (BUF), All African Peoples Revoluntionary Party (AAPRP), National Black Communications Coalition (NBCC), The National Conference on Black Lawyers (NBCL), Communists Workers Party (CWP), League of Revolutionary Struggle (LRS) and The Communist Party--Marxist-Leninist (CP)

Most psychologists agree on a correlation between urbanization and family breakdown. Urbanization is responsible for breaking up the extended families that were a prime source of financial and psychological support for Blacks in the rural south. Virtually every aspect of the urban crisis--poverty and welfare, crime housing, unemployment and health--could be linked to migration from rural America. Urbanization in America today is reflected by too many people living with too little space. In the United States today, eighty percent (80%) of the population occupies only five percent (5%) of the land. Urbanization and Welfare have resulted in the alienation, fragmentation and detachment of individuals from each other, family, land and God. Welfare, because of its shortcomings and its contradictions, is one of the nation's most abiding urban problems. Welfare has made many Black people "agency-dependent" and in too many cases, taken away the individual's need to be resourceful. A condition of Black people not being able to live with or without Welfare has developed.

Contrary to the writings of many historians, Black families during and after slavery reflected many strengths and positive lifestyles. However, since the World War's migration, Black family unity and cohesiveness has diminished. The 1855-1925 study of Black households by Historian Hubert G. Gutman documents the powerful expression of affective familial and kin beliefs and behavior among poor southern and poor migrant northern Blacks.(5)

As oppressive as slavery was, the Black population was able to develop and sustain meaningful domestic and kin arrangements. Prior to 1917, over ninety percent (90%) of all Black children were born in wedlock;(6) it has only been in the past three decades that one begins to see significant changes taking place in the Black family. Up until 1960, eighty percent (80%) of all Black children lived with both parents. However, by 1980, over fifty percent (50%) of all Black children lived with both parents. Ninety percent (90%) of the Black female headed families lived in poverty level conditions. These changes and conditions can be accounted for by the economic structure and how the structure affects the Black family.

During the 1960's and 70's, the socio-economic conditions of the Black population improved; however, these temporary improvements were offset by the erosion of family strengths such as kinship bonds, egalitarian roles, etc.(7) The erosion of family strengths is reflected by the ever increasing Black divorce rate--203 per 1000 marriages. White and Puerto Rican divorce statistics as of 1980 were 92 and 94 per 1000. Economic catch words of the late 70's such as Black Capitalism and The Black Middle-class have been countered by the economic conditions of the 80's. The decline of the status, power and control of the United States has been domestically reflected in the popularity of concepts such as structural unemployment and a permanent underclass. Such concepts are being used to describe the hopelessness of the prevailing economic situation and the abandonment of certain segments of our population.

The existing shift in Federal Social Policy has had a negative impact upon the low and middle-income Black community. The principal effect of The Social Policy initiatives of the 1960's for Black

Americans was the development of a social welfare economy of publicly funded middle-income service providers and low-income service recipients. By 1976, Federal social policy had shifted from the human capital strategy of the Johnson years to an income maintenance strategy based on cash and in-kind transfers. This system is a primary source of income for the Black poor. At the same time, the majority of employment gains for the Black middle-class during the 1960's came in the public rather than the private sector of the economy, and in public social welfare agencies. "Between 1960 and 1976, the proportion of Blacks working in the public sector mushroomed from 15% to 27% compared with a marginal 13% to 16% for Whites."(8) Thus, 55% of the net employment increase for Blacks since 1960 occurred in public programs compared with 26% for Whites and 26% for Blacks in the period 1940-1960. These figures represent net employment changes rather than the proportion of new jobs that were publicly funded. The recent Black gains have been extraordinarily dependent on the public sector.

The Federal Social Policy of The Anti-poverty and Great Society era has had profound and unanticipated consequences for both Social Policy and the character of Black economic and political development. Federal Social Policy was the key instrument employed to meet the Black demand for inclusion in the economic and political system. Income maintenance and in-kind programs have been responsible for providing assistance to the Black poor, and the public sector economy has been a major cause of the increase in family income among Blacks since 1960. To the extent that the 1960's witnessed the emergence of a new Black middle class, it came about not solely because of macroeconomic policies that induced a tight labor market nor even affirmative action. It is due as much to the public sector. Finally, by incorporating Blacks into the public sector at the state and local level, the Great Society enabled Blacks to gain a political foothold they did not possess prior to 1960.

But if the changes in social policy have had some salutary effects for Blacks, it has also ensnared us in new economic and political dilemmas. Ironically, Federal social welfare policy may be performing a control as well as a reward function for Blacks by restructuring the economic relationship of the middle class to the poor and by generating incentives to maintain the new class relationship. The social welfare economy tends to reinforce a dual labor market, particularly in the Black community. On the one hand, a technologically superfluous underclass has been created, and while the transfer economy clearly sustains the Black poor at a higher economic level, transfer assistance is income-conditioned, and thus discourages the search for work and for higher earnings. On the other hand, the public financing of social and health services creates a primary labor market for aspiring professionals and managers. Middle-class Blacks are encouraged to direct social service programs in the public sector or in "soft money" community-based organizations, as long as the overall power structure and distribution of wealth are not disturbed. Politically, Blacks have been organized into the system of pluralist bargaining at the local level only to find that the political incentives embedded in the social welfare economy and broader political and economic trends have undermined our all too precarious foothold. For both the Black underclass and the Black middle-class,

then, there are policy-generated addictions that make it difficult to break out of the economic and political fixes of the social welfare economy.

As summarized in the aforementioned, the economic and political gains and status of the Black community is predicated on the precarious foothold of the existing social welfare economy; and if Ronald Reagan and Company continue to have their way, it will only be a matter of time before Black Capitalism and the new emerging Black middle-class (9) are exposed for what they really are--myths. Media created labels such as the Emerging Black Middle-Class and the New Black Conservatives(10) has done nothing more than enhanced our falseconscious and divided our ranks. Blacks in America are conspicuous consumers whose status is based on what we drive, drink and wear.(11) As producers and institution-builders, we have failed. We have failed to safeguard and maintain traditional institutions i.e., extended families and Black institutions of higher education; we have also failed to create viable alternative institutions such as elementary/secondary schools and cultural/family services centers. The quality of life and conditions of our Black children is a living testimony to our failure as leaders and a community. The decline and systematic elimination of Black owned land and Black colleges and universities are examples of our impotency as a community.

Traditionally, the Black church has been a spiritual and political anchor in the Black community. What is its status and role today in creating a socially supportive environment for Black children? Black religious and political leadership is debunk--morally, spiritually, and intellectually. Black churches are complacent giants whose real economic, social and political power lag far behind their potential, largely as a result of parochialism and traditional conservatism. Individual ministers are powerful on their own initiative, but Black churches as an institution lack power because Black churches are too involved in their own concerns to look at the broader picture of life Blacks are experiencing. The Black church representing thirteen to eighteen million Christians in the United States has been an institution in search of its role during the latter twentieth century. The churches middle-class attitude which is similar to their White counterparts has plagued the Black church. The church has long equipped us with a middle-class false consciousness while it has become mired in an outdated rural ethos that fails to address the problems of an urban society.

The only religious movement that has been appealing to the urban masses was The Nation of Islam under the spiritual leadership of the late Elijah Muhammad. Originally a religious group which rejected Christianity, The Nation of Islam combined religious, cultural, and economic nationalism. The Nation of Islam was founded in Detroit in 1930. Through the years, it developed into a powerful movement with temples in every major city in the country. Its theology was frequently at odds with orthodox Islam, but its appeal to poor Blacks was widespread. The Nation of Islam's appeal to the poor was manifold; it provided economic security, self respect, and proof that Black Americans could achieve a significant measure of autonomy from the wider society.(12) Cultural nationalism was an important aspect

of the Nation of Islam. Through its network of schools, Blacks were taught self-pride and pride in cultural heritage. It was, perhaps, in economics that the group was most successful. In an effort to establish a parallel Black economy, the Nation of Islam had organized an economic empire of considerable proportions, valued at more than seventy million dollars in 1973. The Nation of Islam owned a chain of giant supermarkets; thousands of acres of farm land where vegetables, cattle, and chickens were raised; and several factories for manufacturing clothing as well as the retail outlets for the goods. In addition, it owned printing plants, a fleet of jet cargo airplanes, and many apartment houses. They thrived at a time when other Black organizations appeared to experience difficulty. The Nation of Islam, with their problems, were able to get dope off the streets, strengthen family unity and provide youth with identity, purpose and direction. They also provided youth with positive strong male images. However, with the death of Elijah Muhammad, fragmentation, and the corruption of leadership associated with power and status has significantly crippled and divided The Nation of Islam. The Nation of Islam has reflected the only viable contemporary Black movement that has impacted the environment of the urban poor.

Religion today has truly evolved to a state of becoming the "opium of the people." Religious leaders today have replaced God with themselves. The tragedy in Jonestown, Guyana is an extreme example of the perversion of religion by a mad man. Historically, religion has been used conveniently, in too many incidences, to the detriment of the masses. Jonestown is but one profound example of the vulnerability of people whose basic human needs (physical, safety, belongingness and love and self-esteem) have not been fulfilled by the institutions of the wider society and the Black community.

Black leadership in the country vis-a-vis a qualitative analysis is at an all time low. Black leadership of the right, center and left are caught up in a crisis of theory and rhetoric. They have sacrificed their connections to their natal communities, families and children for professional growth and party politics. The vast majority of Black politicians subscribe to the political philosophy of the two major parties, and their respective political fortunes are tied to those of their respective party. The traditional civil rights organizations are politically conservative and receive financial assistance from the private sector. Most social service agencies located in the Black community are funded by either the government or by other capitalist-controlled funding sources.

The present political base of the Black establishment at the local, regional, state and federal levels were created specifically to diffuse the mass militant upsurge which developed in the Black Movement during the 60's. To accomplish this end, the United States Government responded to the specific demands from the Black masses by expanding and consolidating the political base of the petty-bourgeois wing of the Black Movement. In response to the mass struggle for voting rights that took place in the south during the early 1960's, Washington passed the Voting Rights Bill and the number of Black elected officials increased from 103 in 1964 to over 4600 in 1980.

This base was further expanded by the creation of numerous anti-poverty programs and other related agencies which also served, in part, to stifle the growth of independent, mass oriented institutions which were then springing up in Black communities all across the country. The N.A.A.C.P. and Urban League had always been conservative and thus easily assimilated into the mainstream political arena, like the major labor organizations a generation or so earlier.

Varying political perspectives exist within the Black Establishment. Some members are more progressive than others, but these differences are not very significant. Mainstream Black political thought from the right--Black conservatives--fall squarely within the spectrum of mainstream United States political thought. The paradox of Black leadership is reflected by the contradictions within the Black Establishment. Black leaders are saddled with the impossible task of trying to convince the Black community, and themselves, that the existing political order can somehow reconcile the interest of United States Capitalism with the interests of the Black masses. In addition, Black leaders must struggle against White racism which hinders their growth as a class. On the other front, they must struggle against the Black masses in order to maintain their class hegemony in the Black community. Thus, they struggle against capitalism and alongside capitalism while they struggle against the Black masses and alongside the masses. These factors explain, but only in part, the extreme vacillations and foolishness that are usually found in the policies and pronouncements of contemporary mainstream Black leadership. Jonestown, Buyana and The Miami Rebellion of 1980 are indicators that reveal Black leadership for what it is: Impotent and alienated from the masses.

What is necessary to develop a socially supportive environment for Black youth in America?

The Black community has abandoned Black youth. The Michael Turners, Jacques Broussards and David Santos's reflect their environments and the lack of support of the family, church, community and other institutions. The absence of such institutions in the lives of many young people today has left a void of support and values. Many Black children are denied basic rights before they are born, beginning with a lack of prenatal care, and that for many this basic deprivation continues and accelerates as they grow older. As Miller Charles, head of The Department of Social Welfare at New Orleans' Southern University, says, "It's wrong to see what's going on with kids as separate and distinct from what's going on in the larger society. Whose finger is on the gun?" she asks rhetorically. "Is it simply the finger that pulls the trigger, or is it all the other fingers that led to that point?" Charles, also contends, "if kids are hostile, it's because society--and by that I mean parent(s); individuals and institutions--doesn't care about them."

"What has happened to my people?" This statement was made by a young Black, female college professor while tears of sorrow and sympathy welled in her eyes. Something, indeed, has happened to Black people and it is primarily negative. Blacks are now in a deteriorating state in North America in every possible way: economically, educationally, and psychologically. It is well known that hypertension,

strokes, heart-attacks and suicide are on the increase in the Black community. Future prospects are for a continued increase. The leading causes of death among young Black males is suicide--an indication of the hopelessness and loss of the will to live by these unfortunate young people.

The "me generation" propaganda of the last decade, with its emphasis on getting things--clothes, money, a good job or power--over having or relating to children, has filtered down to young people through television, magazines, newspapers and the attitudes of the adults around them. It's not a climate conducive to having young people form positive self images and value systems. For teenagers such as Michael Turner, Jacques Broussard and David Santos who were born in the middle or late 1960's, their coming of age has been punctuated by assassinations, war, impeachment and a seemingly endless stream of elected officials forced from office by revelations of corruption. In such a landscape, and with the added collapse of the family as we knew it, the lessening influence of the church and the nearly across-the-board failure of the schools, is it any wonder that many kids feel confused, frightened and hopeless and that a small but growing number turn to criminal activity.

The time has arrived for Black men and women to redefine their social realities and develop an agenda based on unity (umoja) and self-determination (kujichagulia); such an agenda will be used for the development of an environment that will nurture a new breed of Black children. As noted by Journalist Jill Nelson, "The majority of Black youth are not the so cold type that they would literally, just as soon kill you as look at you." "But the fact is that most of our kids are salvable." "Their basic problems are that they are confused, misguided, hungry for some attention and guidance but growing more alienated with each day without it."(13) The fear of children, who were once thought to be our future, are being prosecuted in many states as adults. Where and how will it end?

Many of us have abdicated our responsibility to a bankrupted and insensitive state oppressor, while others of us have given up caring and fallen prey to environmental determinism. Sub standard has become standard. We have given up any hope or resolving the sub-standard physical and/or psychological conditions that assault us each day in cities and suburbs.

The first step to developing a socially supportive environment for nurturing a new breed of Black children is to understand the dynamics of change. The only phenomenon that is absolute is change. The difference between the concepts of development and underdevelopment is manipulating/controlling as opposed to being manipulated/controlled by the forces of your environment. Determinism is based on a lack of free will. Environmental determinism is accepting the conditions of your circumstances without resistance or struggle.

Change comes about through a process of evolution or revolution. Nothing less than a revolution can establish the supportive environment necessary to nurture a new breed of Black children. Nothing comes easy. As Fredrick Douglass said more than a century ago, "If there is no struggle, there is not progress." "Power concedes

nothing without a demand." "It never did and it never will." "Men may not get all they pay for in this world, but they must certainly pay for all they get."

A revolution is necessary to recover our children's minds and spirits. A revolution is necessary to establish a Black value system. Such a revolution has to be cultural in nature. Liberation of Black minds and spirits is predicated on a cultural as opposed to a political or economic solution. Without identity, you cannot develop purpose and direction. Culture is the societal glue that is lacking and needed for our emancipation and collective development. The only Black leader of our century to formalize a mass movement around such a concept was Marcus Garvey. The only contemporary movement to rival the Garvey Movement was Elijah Muhammad's Nation of Islam. Both succumbed to weak infrastructures. Since Elijah Muhammad's death, The Nation has split into two factions which has weakened their purpose and appeal to the masses. The two competing factions are lead by Louis Farrakhan and Wallace Muhammad. The cultural nationalism of the 60's and 70's lacked purpose and direction. It was supervicial and short lived. It never progressed beyond the theoretical and scholarly halls of academia. The Black Studies and Black History Departments of yesteryears are becoming extinct.

A cultural revolution for the masses is necessary to provide a Black value system. The theory and practice of a Black value system is our only hope for the survival of Black children. The nature of the revolution we must foster will not be an easy one to achieve. The challenges are great.

Modern technology is so all-embracing that those who want to change it cannot stand completely outside it. But those who stand within it are easily neutralized. In fact, the pressures and rewards of the present system tend to blind us to the issues and incapacitate us for the struggle. A revolution will depend upon a vanguard that is free to see what is happening, discern the shape of the future, and accept a new vocation over against The System.

Black leadership of today as in the past, babbles about "social change," "Black Capitalism," "Revolution," etc., but they understand nothing about a movement of scientific thought on a national scale. In such a movement in America, whatever the organizational formula, the basic ingredients must be a synthesis of politics, economics and culture, and from the Black point of view, it is the cultural side of the problem that puts politics and economics into their proper focus within a movement. Without a cultural philosophy, the Black community will continue to be left in the limbo of social marginality, alienated and idrectionless on the landscape of America.

A cultural philosophy for our community should be based on the concept of Black communal family. Black communal family is predicated on a system that is a dialectic progression beyond extended family. It is a collective family network not based on kin relationship, but on authentic community which is a state of mind--caring and sharing beyond neighborhood and nation-state boundaries. The cultural implications of the Black Communal Family System is developing a sense of Harambee or we-ness from an Afro-centric perspective.

For the purpose of analytical clarity, the Black Communal Family concept reflects an African-based reality. Such a reality is based on an argument which pre-supposes that the African cultural heritage or philosophical world view was not severed by the "horrors of the middle passage" nor the cruelty of the West Indian seasoning camps and new world plantation life. It is rather suggested that the continuance of the traditional African world view has and still does to some extent define the basic structures and functions of Black family units.

The Black Community Family which is based on the African ethos or guiding principle of Harambee can be perceived as defining or determining two operational orders: (1) the survival of the Tribe (community), and (2) oneness of being. Behavioral principles associated with the ethos is unity, cooperative effort, mutual responsibility, reconciliation, etc. The Communal Family structurally stretches horizontally and vertically taking into account every member of the community. Survival of The Tribe and oneness of being implies the interconnectedness of all elements of the community--individual persons recognizing that their very existence depends not only on those who conceive and personally nourishes them, but every member of the community--old and young, living and dead.

For analytical purposes, one can divide the functional character of the Black Communal Family system into three areas: The pragmatic functions, the psychological functions, and the cultural functions. Pragmatically, The System insures the provision of food, shelter, clothing and protection. Psychologically, The System offers a sense of belonginess. Culturally, The System provides identity for enhancing self-esteem. It is via the psychological and cultural functions of The System that our children become conscious of their own being, purpose and responsibilities toward oneself and other people.

The process for the implementation of such a system is through a Black Communal Family Network. The Network is the beginning of a protracted struggle to develop a cultural revolution. The revolutionary solution involves an evolutionary process. The battle for the minds and spirits of individuals in the Black community will involve a bottoms-up approach of education, mobilization and organization. The approach will focus on alternative strategies for impacting community issues such as hunger, child day care, mis-education, teen-age pregnancy, crime, unemployment, welfare dependency, etc. The Network will provide direct services to children and their families through cultural arts, child day care, marriage and family support/guidance and community organizing.

The long run organizational and programmatic goals of The Network should be a progression from a non-profit status to the inclusion of profit-making ventures and incorporation. The Network should be primarily subsidized with funds raised in the Black community. While it is imperative that the Black community insist upon receiving its fair share of government and philanthropic dollars, there is an honorable tradition of Black self-reliance and independence--a tradition that antedates White philanthropy by many, many years. It is this tradition, and the creation of radical new ways of raising funds that must be explored.

By means of independent Black fund raising, The Network will be able to pursue its own course of cultural and social development free of restraints that are imposed by traditional sources. Given the present funding crisis, a look at the old tradition of Black self reliance is timely and necessary. There are strengths and resources within the Black community which remain largely untapped due to limited scale of organized Black fund raising activities. New ways must be found to activate these resources and make them available to community organizations.

The New Black United Fund Movement is a response to the need for a philanthropic infrastructure which is self-controlled and self-determined. Recently a Black United Fund of Greater Cleveland started its first fund raising campaign with a fifteen thousand dollars ($15,000.00) contribution from a Black social service organization. The challenge to the Black United Fund Movement and Black Foundations such as The Herndon or The Twenty-First Century Foundations should be not to emulate their traditional White counterparts; but to support progressive Black social priorities. Progressive Black social priorities are defined as communalistic efforts that facilitate identity, purpose and direction from an Afro-Centric perspective.

Black Americans are the only major population in America that do not have an organization, religious or cultural, that reflects our community and/or family interest. There exist a Federation of Catholic Community Services, The Catholic Family Counseling Center, The Jewish Community Federation, Jewish Welfare Fund, The Jewish Family Services Center, etc. These are particular interest groups that are primarily funded by the Catholic and Jewish populations. The fund raising efforts of the Jewish community reflects a survival of the tribe and oneness of being ethos similar to traditional African society.

The interconnectedness of contemporary Jewish social reality--survival of The Tribe was recently exemplified by The Cleveland Jewish Community Federation. The September 4, 1982 Cleveland Plain Dealer reported that "The Jewish Community Federation here raised $4,458,917 in an emergency campaign this summer to help pay for human services that Israel might not be able to support because of the cost of war in Lebanon." "The Federation said the money was going to the Jewish Agency for Israel for services such as Israeli Universities, recreational activities for disadvantaged youths and medical care for immigrants." "The Jewish community in Cleveland was the first in the country to launch a separate drive this summer to meet Israel's needs, The Federation said." "The campaign was separate from the regular Jewish Welfare Fund appeal." This is the essence of cultural nationalism.

The origins of Harlem's Black community were founded in the spirit of cultural nationalism which had economic determinants and political consequences. At the turn of this century, Harlem was a predominantly White community that had been "overbuilt with new apartment houses that landlords found hard to fill."(14) However, the Harlem Whites organized to use all means--legal, persuasive, and conspiratorial--to stem the Black influx which assumed mass proportions around 1905.

Through the efforts of Philip A. Payton, T. Thomas Fortune and The Guiding Mind of Booker T. Washington, The Afro-American Realty Company was formed to buy or lease apartment dwellings that would not be rented to Blacks. Later Payton's Group incorporated with a capitalization of $500,000 at ten dollars per share with the aim of expanding operations to include building apartments. Despite much bitter feeling during a fifteen year struggle of Blacks to gain a foothold, Harlem was won without serious violence. The winning of Harlem was predicated on race support vis-a-vis the issue of better housing for Black people in New York. The process was economic national with a cultural foundation. The history and tradition of Black people reflected successful mutual aid victories under circumstances of a far worse magnitude than what we experience today. We have become slaves to our own inactions.

Individually, Black people are poor, but collectively based on our 1981 national income of $140 billion, we spent more as consumers than some countries in Europe and most countries in Africa had in their entire national budgets for that year.(15)

The prevailing roles of Black churches have been discussed in the aforementioned. I will not go as far as Dostoievsky and say, "If religion didn't exist, everything would be possible;" but Black churches over the past thirty years have abandoned the Black community; historically, religion has served a positive role in the lives of Black people, but its recent role over the past few decades has been anti-community. The collective response of the Black Church to the existing conditions of urban Black America has been nil. With all the funds and people that go through Black churches, The Church has failed to take on a progressive cultural or social advocacy role.

The only acceptable role of The Church during the proposed process should be Christian Faith providing the resources for being authentically revolutionary. Through the right leadership, Christian Faith can produce the type of person whose own inward experience of death and resurrection equips him to let the old die when its time has come, and frees him to give form to new possibilities open before him. This is what we most desperately need today: Men and women liberated for creativity, participating in a community in which they are forced to die daily in order to create new ideas, new perspectives, new experiments, new institutions, new political possibilities. In other words, our community needs cadres of men, women and youth who are as seriously concerned as the Freedom Fighters in Azania and Angola and The P.L.O. throughout the Middle East, to bury the dead, violate the old and create the new. When such a moment arrives, the distinctiveness of The Christian Witness does not lie in its emphasis upon the values to be preserved from the past, but rather in the freedom it offers to bury the dead without remorse, to create the new in response to the future rather than in reaction against the past, and to preserve an iconoclastic attitude throughout the revolution.

In summary, The Survival of The Black Child: Our Resource of The Future is in jeopardy. Increases in the Michael Turners, Jacques

Broussards and David Santos's are very likely unless revolutionary changes take place in our communities and families. All the seeds of destruction and demise are being reflected in the behavior and actions of our children who are nothing more than photo copies of ourselves.

The proposed alternative to the complex problem is but a generalized basic step in a protracted struggle of cultural revolution. The problems and conditions I have described have been described many times before throughout Afro-American history; however, I repeat the analysis because no one has paid attention, history continues to repeat itself. The situation of Black America today is worse now than in the past because we have become thoroughly entrenched--consciously and unconsciously with the madness and values of our oppressors. As Frantz Fanon said, "The oppressed take on the values of their oppressor."(16) Today the oppression has taken on a covert nature through the auspices of institutional racism and class struggles. Today Black America is its own worst enemy. Today, we are as responsible, if not more for the Michaels, Jacques and Davids than the "man" and his system. We stand on the corners in our pink rollers and behind our desk with pleated skirts and ties and credentials and Sunday robes while our children attack, rape and emulate our fears and habits and values.

The need of establishing a Black frame-of-reference for defining our social realities and implementing a Black value system is crucial for our cultural revolution. Traditional institutions in our communities have failed to facilitate an environment that provides for the pragmatic, psychological and cultural needs of our children. Many of the traditional institutions and leadership are Black on the outside but White on the inside. Cooptation through a neo-colonial process has emasculated most of our community institutions and so-called Black organizations. The conflict between community priorities and the priorities of public and private funders has limited the effectiveness of community social services agencies. The bureaucracy and politics of traditional social services administration has also complicated and diluted their effectiveness. They are nothing more than social pacification outlets. The solution to facilitate community needs and to initiate a cultural revolution is a Black funded and controlled institution. Dependency on institutions such as Cleveland's Karamu under the existing leadership and the Department of Housing and Urban Development under the leadership of the Samuel Pierce types, the Black community will continue to regress. Be it a Black organization with a Black leadership or a White organization with Black leadership, as long as either is financially controlled by external forces, leadership and policy will always be vulnerable to the whims of The Master. Self-determination is a state of mind based on an identity and power base. Anything short of the preceding causes identity and allegiance confusion.

A value system has three functions. It gives some predictability of behavior, it is an ultimate authority and it serves as a means of security.

It is not necessary to invent the wheel over again, the principles of a Black value system do exist. Dr. Maulana Ron Karenga during

the late 60's developed a total Black ideology of change known as Kawaida. The ideology is an articulate conceptualization of revolutionary cultural nationalism. The crux of the ideology is based on the "Ngzo Saba, The Seven Principles of The Kawaida Faith."(17) Dr. Karenga's interpretation of cultural nationalism lays great stress on a change of values and the seven principles are the alternative values that he feels will allow us to rebuild our Black selves, children, family, community, nation, race, and to take our meaningful part in the total Third World struggle for liberation. The seven principles are as follows:

Umoja (Unity)
Kujichagulia (Self-Determination)
Ujima (Collective work and responsibility)
Ujamaa (Cooperative economics)
Nia (Purpose)
Kuumba (Creativity)
Imani (Faith)

What I have proposed is not an overnight panacea. I do not expect people to take to the streets, chant slogans, arm themselves, attack White people, etc., what I have proposed is a cultural revolution for the liberation of our children's minds and spirits. We are presently fighting a losing battle, the few of us who are fighting, against the destructive values of the wider society.

The wider society values of individualism, materialism and hedonism are perpetuated and reinforced through the mass media. The mass media industry via television, radio, movies and the other imagery modes have kidnapped our children through media manipulation/programming. We have lost our children to "Planet Rock," Christmas, Calvin Klein, The Jheri Curl, etc. The serious consequences of the introduction of the mass media into American capitalism have not been matched in any other country in the western world. They were consequences not taken into account by the Marxist theories about capitalism and the class struggle. The mass communication media have, over the past fifty years, changed America into a mass society. "In a mass society, the dominant type of communication is the formal media, and the public becomes mere media markets. In this view, the public is merely the collectivity of individuals each passively exposed to the mass media and rather helplessly opened up to the suggestions and manipulations that flow from these media."(18) The mass media is responsible for creating the falseconsciousness and rising expectations of our children. The falseconsciousness and rising expectations have caused conflict, confusion, anger, hostilities and anxieties vis-a-vis the realities of the society.

The cultural revolution, I am proposing through a Black Communal Family Network will insulate our children with a Black value system which will enable them to understand the dynamics of the Babylon that they are living in. Sacrifices on our parts as parent(s), social change agents, concerned adults or whoever will be necessary to monitor our children's environments from the negative external manipulation and programming.

Controlling and monitoring our children's environment is imperative. The number one socializer of Black children today is the television.

With the advent of cable, Preview and Showtime, anything is possible. The violence and sex portrayed through the television has significantly contributed to the delinquency and corruption of our children. Television has also infringed upon the creativity and verbal interaction of children. Creating cultural alternatives to the mass media through the performing arts will be a function of The Network. The revival of Jazz and the introduction of Reggae music, etc., will be provided as alternatives to the melodic grunts and groans of radio copulation. Instead of boycotting, parent(s) will be educated on the influences of the mass media and be advised to become true revolutionaries by discarding their radios and televisions.

Another revolutionary sacrifice might be asking parent(s) and children to abandon and replace a holiday such as Christmas with Kwanza. We must institute holidays which speak directly to the needs of Black people. It is necessary to address ourselves to concrete needs and not desires.

Our children must realize money is not the answer to the problem unless you have a value for spending it. There are some Black millionaires but they aren't benefiting us. Why? No values.

Until we define ourselves as Black people--men and women--we will continue to internalize the definition and values of the wider society and grow further apart from each other and our natal communities. Without a culture, Black people are only a set of reactions to an oppressive system. A culture is what legitimizes a peoples' action and in turn, gives self respect. The process that has been advocated will be a basic step in providing identity, purpose and direction to nurture that much needed breed of Black children!

FOOTNOTES

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